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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
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INFO RHMFISS/CDR USSOCOM MACDILL AFB FL//SCJ2//
RULGPIA/USCOMSOLANT

UNCLAS BUENOS AIRES 002073

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STATE FOR INR/R/MR, I/GWHA, WHA, WHA/PDA, WHA/BSC,
WHA/EPSC
CDR USSOCOM FOR J-2 IAD/LAMA

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [MEDIA](#) [REACTION](#)
SUBJECT: FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF 9/11; LATIN AMERICAN ISSUES;
US-URUGUYAN FTA; NORTH KOREA; BOLIVIA; 09/12/06

1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Today's most important international story is US President George W. Bush's speech on the fifth anniversary of 9/11. Other international stories include Uruguayan President Tabare Vazquez's attempt to gather support from his Mercosur counterparts for his negotiations to reach an FTA with the US; North Korea's armament race; and Bolivia's proposal to broaden US preferential rates for Bolivian exports.

2. OPINION PIECES AND KEY STORIES

- "'Struggle for civilization'"

Liberal, English-language "Buenos Aires Herald" front-pages (09/12)
"US President George W. Bush, on the fifth anniversary of the September 11 attacks, said yesterday the war against terror 'is a struggle for civilization' that will require a determined effort by a unified country.

"'We are fighting to maintain the way of life enjoyed by free nations,' Bush said in remarks prepared for a prime-time address from the Oval Office...

"'Our nation has endured trials, and we face a difficult road ahead,' the president said.

"Before his address, Bush visited New York City, Shanksville, Pennsylvania, and the Defense Department to pay respect to the victims of the attack and show resolve in the struggle against Islamic militants.

"Al-Jazeera aired a new videotape yesterday in which Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden's top deputy warned that Persian Gulf countries and Israel would be the terror group's next targets.

"'America did not ask for this war (on terror), and every American wishes it were over,' the president said. 'And so do I. But the war is not over - and it will not be over until either we or the extremists emerge victorious.'"

- "Warrior"

Paula Lugones, international columnist of leading "Clarín," writes (09/12) "He visited fire brigades, kissed children and shed some tears. However, George W. Bush used his entire political arsenal for the upcoming November legislative elections.

"He used his speech to take his 'warrior' version to its maximum expression - he seeks to be seen as indispensable in leading the fight against 'evil.' In a simple speech..., he spoke of a lifestyle

that is being jeopardized and a clash of civilizations...

"In a few weeks, there will be legislative elections, in which keeping a majority is crucial for a president that is being harassed by lies about war. It is not a minor issue - if Bill Clinton's lies about an intern brought him to the verge of impeachment, what could happen to Bush with a Congress against him?"

- "That revealing dialogue in Pakistan"

Oscar Raul Cardoso, international analyst for leading "Clarín," opines (09/12) "During the first week of October 2001, a US lieutenant colonel described what he thought would be a fast victory over the primitive Taliban, which was not a match for the best-trained Western military 'muscle.'

"When asked what the US would do with Osama bin Laden when he was caught, the military said 'Honestly, I do not believe we can find him or that we can exhibit his body if we kill him. Where could we try him without generating charges and scandal?"

"Five years later, US intelligence sources told 'The Washington Post' that the special forces used to hunt Bin Laden... have no idea where he is..."

"Presumably, Bin Laden is still hidden in one of the most impregnable terrains of the world, on the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan... Bin Laden's prolonged freedom smells like defeat for Bush and his staff. Similarly, the fact that the Taliban resistance has grown stronger while NATO troop casualties in Afghanistan have surpassed those in Iraq defies 'Western military muscle.'"

- "Refound or confound?"

Michael Soltys, executive editor of liberal, English-language

"Buenos Aires Herald," writes (09/12) "Refoundation is the fashion in Latin America these days - or at any rate both Bolivia's constituent assembly and the runner-up from Mexico's elections last July are promising to refound their countries.

"... What might save Mexico from a terminal crisis is the weakness of both sides. Calderon is a weak minority president with just over a third of the vote but Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador is even weaker with less than a third himself..."

"Moreover, the economy is on PAN's side, as in the case of most sitting Latin American governments - especially in an oil producer like Mexico.

"The deadlock in Bolivia equally remains as rigid as ever... A key question is how much further than a strike are these restive departments prepared to go in their autonomy drive - all the way to secession? And in that case, would the Evo Morales administration resort to military action to restore order?"

- "Tabare asks Kirchner to let him negotiate an FTA with the US"

Nelson Fernandez, on special assignment in Montevideo for daily-of-record "La Nacion," writes (09/12) "Since the countdown started for the formal launching of negotiations for an FTA between the US and the Uruguayan government, Uruguayan President Tabare Vazquez has been rapidly meeting with his Mercosur partners to gather support for the negotiations.

"... Vazquez asked Mercosur to implement the measures to meet four goals - in the free trade area, improve the 'free circulation' of goods within the bloc; in the 'customs union,' remove demands 'related to the common foreign tariff' and prioritize 'macroeconomic coordination;' on foreign exchange, assess its levels with a view to reducing tariffs; and regarding 'foreign negotiations,' provide a 'flexible' position for Mercosur countries to allow external bilateral deals.

"Vazquez wants to reach a deal 'before the end of the year' in order to obtain the US Congress' fast track authority in July."

- "Bolivia could finance its exports to the US"

Business-financial, center-right "InfoBae" (09/12) reports "Bolivian President Alvaro Garcia Linera arrived yesterday in Washington to broaden preferential rates for Andean countries in return for the country's anti-drug efforts...

"Nonetheless, Bolivian President Evo Morales announced a 'bridge loan' aimed at facilitating the access of Bolivian exports to US markets vis-à-vis the possibility that the US does not agree to broaden preferential rates.

"Morales said that the government will use a temporary 12-million dollar loan to finance the payment of tariffs for the entry of Bolivian products to US markets, just in case preferential rates are not renewed."

13. EDITORIALS

- "Sanctions on North Korea"

An editorial in daily-of-record "La Nacion" reads (09/12) "The North Korean dictatorial regime has challenged the international community during recent years. Firstly, by violating its commitments set forth by the Non Proliferation Treaty, and then, by abandoning this treaty and speeding up its WMD programs...

"Up until some months ago, North Korea managed to eliminate the barriers placed by the international community to prevent its trafficking of arms. However, during recent months things have changed and some nations have decided to cooperate in interrupting North Korea's flow of proliferation.

"China and South Korea are preventing North Korean financial transactions through their respective financial networks... Vietnam and Mongolia have contributed their valuable help for this purpose.

"However, North Korea has refused to resume negotiations with its interlocutors until financial restrictions are lifted.

"For the moment, Russia is the only country that still seems to let North Korea use its banking system. Curiously enough, it is one of the five nations that has negotiated to obtain North Korea's interruption of its dangerous WMD programs. Russia's attitude is not in tune with a consistent behavior.

"Meanwhile, Venezuela is determined to get closer to North Korea and there is talk about an upcoming trip of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez to Pyongyang...

"Therefore, North Korea is also likely to cooperate militarily with Venezuela, all of which raises concern in the region."

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